DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 103 SP 041 636

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TITLE Seeking a Cure for Leadership in Our Lifetime.

PUB DATE 2002-00-00

NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 21-25, 2002).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Leadership; *Leadership Responsibility; Power Structure; *Principals; *Psychosomatic Disorders; School Administration

IDENTIFIERS Psychosocial Factors

ABSTRACT

This study examined how self-described "wounded school leaders" were being wounded by leadership itself. It grew out of three earlier studies that investigated the leadership crisis in U.S. schools, focusing on the similarities between the stories leaders were telling about crises in practice and those of individuals confronting medical illness. Data came from interviews with 65 superintendents, principals, and heads of independent schools who had experienced significant crises in their own leadership practice. Overall, leaders believed wounding took many forms, ranging from disappointments, problems, or disorienting dilemmas to full-blown crises. The wounding experience was driven by a fundamental underlying proposition: a leader is impelled into a state of dissonance to which he or she adapts. Byproducts of leadership work included vulnerability, fear, isolation, power, and fear of powerlessness. An important learnable moment for leaders often occurred during a wounding crisis and times of discord. Many school leaders became "other centered," carrying the weight of other people's worries, problems, and desires, then developing their own wounds precisely because they often believed they had to hide their fears and vulnerabilities from others. Leaders often believed they had to be helpers and fixers, as well as independent and strong, which thwarted them from listening to their own needs. (Contains 77 references.) (SM)

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Seeking a Cure for Leadership in Our Lifetime

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Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association
April 2002 New Orleans

SP041636

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Our research focus over the past several years has been to understand what a self-described leadership crisis or "wounding" experience means to educational leaders and how it influences their professional as well as personal growth and development (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, In Press). This research represents an emerging line of inquiry, specifically into the interpersonal and intrapersonal realms of leadership and what this means for the role of leader. Previous studies (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2001; Maslin-Ostrowski & Ackerman, 1998a, 1999, 2000a) have been driven by two interrelated questions. First, how does a reasonable, well-intentioned person, who happens to be a school leader, preserve a healthy and real sense of self in the face of a host of factors challenging that self in the best scenario, and leading to a wounding crisis in the worst? Second, what perspective toward the work of leadership might fortify the impact of these challenges, and produce a mindset that leaves the person open to learn and grow from such experience? Wounding tends to occur in relation to a leader's efforts, conscious and unconscious, to cope with what we think of as endemic conditions or "givens" of leadership life. We find four givens are particularly relevant to the work of leadership and manifested in the wounding experience: vulnerability, isolation, fear, and power. An understanding of these dimensions is important to the sense that leadership is worth doing not simply for what is to be accomplished, but for the essential and sustaining aspects of the work of leadership.

This latest paper, extending and building upon earlier studies (See discussion below.), serves as a capstone investigation and is guided by what seems to be an inevitable "so what" question: to what extent are self-described wounded leaders being wounded by leadership itself? Can there be something in the nature of leadership that inhibits knowledgeable, skilled, decisive, and well-intentioned people from successfully realizing the mandate to lead? Simply put, what is it about leadership that, at times, gets in the way of leadership? Although there has been a virtual revolution in medicine concerning how we think about the diseases that now afflict us, this has not been the case in educational leadership. The current state of leadership practiced in schools makes leadership seem increasingly at risk. There is widespread agreement that in the United States schools are facing a dearth of school leaders capable of providing good leadership. Constant reports on the shortage of school leaders, as well as concerns regarding the job itself, find more wounded leaders leaving or languishing in the world of schools than ever before. Retirement, the decreasing number of applicants, and inadequate leadership support and development account for some of these conditions (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1999), but not all. School leaders and those aspiring to leadership persistently cite job-related stress and time fragmentation, the growing pressure of high stakes testing and accountability, and the social problems that schools are assuming in trying to instruct students as major factors influencing their standing (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001). It is not surprising that many school leaders today are increasingly reluctant to assume a job as difficult as leadership has become, a concern increasingly heightened by the institutional and ultimately personal challenges that compel leaders themselves to contemplate these issues. In our view, a leader's conscious relation to the givens of leadership life -- vulnerability, isolation, fear, and power -- contains the seeds of wisdom and perhaps transformation in that these givens make it possible to harness their power in the service of personal change and growth. In the

worst case, the givens can lead further down the path of the so-called leadership crises upon us. Either way, the impact can be profound on school leaders and leadership itself.

Overview of Wounded Leader Research & Methodology

The research background for this study represents a line of investigation into leaders and leadership crisis that has progressed over a period of seven years. Three early studies that we conducted about how school leaders use story to make sense of their practice brought us to the idea of a wounded leader (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 1995 & 1997; Ackerman, Maslin-Ostrowski, & Christensen, 1996). The combined sample for these three leadership studies consisted of 215 prospective and practicing leaders. Our quest began with a comparative study of the case study method and an approach we call case story (Maslin-Ostrowski & Ackerman, 1998b). Continuing this line of inquiry, our next study examined how school leaders learn to think together -- not just in the sense of analyzing a shared dilemma or issue, but in how story-forms shape meanings for groups of people and lead to a kind of critical conversation (Brookfield, 1995) through which thoughts, emotions, and actions fit into a greater whole. This led to our third study where we began to speculate that in many instances, the case story groups have the potential to develop a kind of host system of social, cognitive, and emotional structures for nurturing the capacity to pay attention to the meaning of individual experience and its power to instruct.

Reflecting on these three studies, we redirected our research somewhat as we began to see a striking similarity between the stories leaders were telling about crises in practice and those of individuals confronting a medical illness. This led us to explore the literature about illness experiences and ethics in the writings of Arthur Frank, Arthur Kleinman, and Rachel Remen, among others. Eager to pursue this concept with educational leaders, we initiated our study of the wounded leader. These phenomenological studies, completed in four stages (the present study is the fifth in this series), were an effort to "listen our way" into the worlds of public and private school administrators identified as having experienced a crisis or critical event in their leadership practice that had profoundly affected or wounded them, in order to understand the essence of their wounding experience.

The purpose of the first study (Maslin-Ostrowski & Ackerman, 1998a, *The wounded leader: Looking for the good story*) was to understand how significant leadership crises create a particular context for telling stories and, specifically, how the lives of school leaders are affected by the stories they tell. We were interested not just in the explicit content of the stories--the actions, events, and responses--but, in how these leader stories served to address the woundedness of the leaders and helped them, in a sense, to heal themselves. Our second study (Maslin-Ostrowski & Ackerman, 1999, *On being wounded: Implications for school leadership*) added a new focus: What are the wounds of school leaders? How do they understand them and what are the boundaries that prevent them from seeing their wounds? With the findings of these studies in mind, our third investigation (Maslin-Ostrowski & Ackerman, 2000b, *The wounded leader: Implications for educational leadership preparation & professional development*) expanded to explore what school leaders learn from their wounds, and how educational

leadership preparation and professional development programs might better support the growth of wounded leaders. The fourth study in this series sought to understand the emotional dimensions of becoming a wounded leader (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2001, *The emotional landscape: Lessons from wounded leaders*).

This paper, *Seeking a Cure for Leadership*, represents the fifth and final study. It explores the relationship between a leader's wounding experience and the practice of school leadership. The fifth study draws on and extends the prior studies; it represents the culmination of the wounded leader studies.

In order to address the various questions, we designed an interview approach using leaders' first person accounts of their experiences with crises as the primary source of information. Located within the broad perspective of qualitative research, the study was phenomenological (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1988) in that it focused on the individual leader's meaning of the phenomenon or experience of being wounded. The set of five studies conducted over time allowed us to direct our analysis toward different questions each time while also extending analysis of prior questions (Maslin-Ostrowski & Ackerman, 1998a, 1999 & 2000b; Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2001).

It was not feasible to conduct observations nor did we see any merit in doing extensive document analysis. Documents were used simply to provide a profile of the school sites and, when possible, to extend our understanding of the crisis. This included demographic information, school literature and at times, newspaper articles about the school and administration. Thus the study used a single method for data collection, interviews, which is a limitation.

The overall purposeful sample for the five wounded leader studies consists of 65 educational leaders who have dealt with a significant crisis in their own leadership practice. We targeted superintendents, principals, and heads of independent schools. Our sample is far from random. The first set of seven leaders was found through our personal network of contacts; then using referrals from the participants and colleagues around the country, the sample expanded.

Leaders were invited to think about and choose a crisis experience that had affected them significantly and that they would be willing to discuss. Participants came from a variety of school contexts, including elementary, middle, and high school, and representing public and private institutions. They worked and lived in urban, suburban, and rural settings located in various regions of the country. Leaders served communities that were diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity. The small number of cases is a study limitation. To increase our sample, for each subsequent study, we included all interviews from prior wounded leader studies.

For all interviews, we used a simple interview guide and asked open-ended questions that directed participants toward our line of inquiry. Our intent was to facilitate a narrative telling and

not to interfere with the participant's responses. Thus the discourse of the interviews was conversational not standardized questioning. We tried to create an interview environment that allowed the story teller to make sense of his or her experience as we listened. This 1:1 in-depth approach to interviews was appropriate because it supported the telling of personal, sensitive experiences and perspectives.

All interviews were audio taped and later carefully transcribed, incorporating the words of both participant and interviewer. Demographic information about the participants and their school settings was collected through the interviews, as well as from documents. Confidentiality was promised to each participant.

For the first study, three interviews were held with each of the seven participants over a period of nine months, and each interview was ninety minutes to two hours in length (Seidman, 1991). During the initial interview a narrator was invited to reconstruct his life/career history, telling about past experiences as an educator up to the point of the crisis. In the second interview participants were asked to reconstruct the experience and tell what happened. Finally, in the third interview narrators were asked to reflect on what was said in the first two interviews, and to talk about what that meant in terms of who they are today as a leader and as a person. They were also invited to reflect on how they presently understand leadership in their lives. What unfolded in the participants' narrative accounts was a combination of a chronology of events and an attempt to give meaning to events.

Again applying an in-depth, phenomenological approach to interviewing, we conducted interviews for the second, third, fourth, and fifth studies whereby we invited each participant to re/construct her wounding experience. (The fourth and fifth studies exclusively conducted follow-up interviews; sample size did not change.) Interviews ranged in length from one to three hours. With some participants, we conducted multiple interviews. Our aim was to learn how school leaders dealt with a self-identified crisis as it had affected their professional lives then and now, why they had decided to follow a particular course of action and what the outcome was. Overwhelmingly, leaders chose to tell about a past wounding experience; all revealed a "living crisis." Our interest was in understanding the stories that they were telling themselves and what the narrative meant to them as leaders and as individuals.

We regularly alternated between data collection and data analysis. Data gathered and analyzed during one phase of the study influenced the collection of data from subsequent participants. After transcribing the audio taped interviews, we carefully read and re-read participants' stories to see how they had given order to their difficult experiences and made sense of these events in their lives. The goal of data analysis was not simply to identify what had happened, but to understand why participants told their story the way that they did. Thus we attempted to look at these stories and consider how interviewees made meaning, rather than fracturing stories into small categories.

Applying investigator triangulation, two researchers independently collected and analyzed all data until findings emerged and consensus was reached. Member checking was completed

when possible to enhance internal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We strived for a mutual interpretation during the actual interview and afterwards with any follow-up session. Conclusions were based on the stories, along with a consideration of alternative interpretations.

What distinguishes the wounded leader study was the participatory nature of the relationship that we established with our narrators (Bosk, 1979, p. 202). We concluded that insights gleaned from the study were, in part, the result of our relationship and that a research method divorced from our interests, purposes, and values, as well as theirs, was neither possible nor desirable. Along these lines, we were open with our participants about being both personally interested in their individual stories and in our research project. Furthermore, because we are two researchers collaborating on one study, we had to wrestle with the process of an additional level of interpretation, i.e. our co-interpretation of stories. Given that all interviews were conducted 1:1, only one of us was present and only one of us had a relationship with the participant. That meant that the researcher who conducted the interview had a tremendous responsibility to portray accurately and honestly the authenticity of the leader's emotions, ideas, and interpretations of the wounding experience. We have tried our best to honor that commitment. From our view, the collaboration helped to recognize bias and enhanced researcher discourse, thus is a strength of the study. The research design therefore required a perspective in which methodology, data, and theory were mutually informing.

The Wound: A Theoretical Framework

Our attempt to define a leadership wound places the experience within varied streams of meaning. We have drawn on literature from disciplines that explore illness experiences (Cousins, 1979; Frank, 1991 & 1995; Kleinman, 1988; Remen, 1996; Sacks, 1998) and have been informed by works which draw out the psychological significance (Judge, 1999; Goleman, 1995 & 1998; Ryback, 1998; Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Post & Robins, 1993; Kets De Vries, 1993; Zaleznik, 1993) and the neurological foundations (Damasio, 1995 & 1999) of crises situations. Finally, we have been inspired by the ranks of humanistic philosophers, psychologists, and thinkers like Nietzche (1924), Kierkegaard (1941a, 1941b), Maslow (1970), Horney (1942), Jung (1959), Rogers (1961), and Yalom (1970) who believe that within the existence of each individual there is a vast potential for self understanding and change.

From the perspective of a school leader, a wound can take many forms — ranging from a disappointment, a problem, a disorienting (Mezirow, 1991) dilemma, to a full blown crisis. It can be stimulated, in some cases, by the sudden appearance of graffiti declaring "the principal sucks!" plastered across the school grounds. It can result from a variety of toxic confrontations, like a parent or teacher challenging a principal's integrity at a public event. It can feel like vague suspicion or outright public condemnation in the press on account of questionable performance. It can take the form of the ignominy of one's school being publicly singled out as the lowest performer on standards-based achievement tests. It can be felt as physical and emotional exhaustion from being too many things to too many people. It can be when the leader acts as though he is something he is not, attempting to live up to an impossible heroic mythology--the result of all the powerful and subtle projections followers tend to place on their leaders (Johnson,

1991& 1993). Existentially, it can be when it seems as if one's role, personal beliefs, actions, and control are simply an illusion, an empty leadership strategy for getting through an administrative day.

These are just some of the plot lines and themes we have heard in our conversations with school leaders over the last seven years. The stories are rich and varied; they do not fall neatly into simple categories. All describe painful nerve roots in leadership work. As such, these scenarios present sources, circumstances, and conditions that in many cases lead to wounding. It ultimately depends, as Dewey said, on the quality of the experience which is had (Dewey, 1963). The wound is best understood where it hurts. The wound develops in relation to a leader's efforts, conscious and unconscious, to cope with what we think of as existential conditions and tensions of leadership life.

On the surface, wounding draws from the endemic and chronic tension affecting leaders, all leaders--tension, as Evans (1996) argued, that is by no means wholly new; however the context of schooling today certainly makes the dilemma seem new, more intense and more real. And lying at a very safe depth below, there is what poet John O'Donohue called, "the inner face," the whole-hearted soul of a human being, so vital and essential to the spirit of a person's life. The leader's inner face is attempting to achieve a genuine level of engagement with others and with the world through this thing called leadership. It is our guess that the wound reaches down and around these layers touching them all in one way or another. We have come to believe that amid this bewildering wounding complexity there is one essential question for the school leader: Who am I, really?

We do not say that leadership wounding defies understanding altogether, or that it cannot be defined; nor do we imply a mystical quality to it. However, we must admit at the outset that the wound by its nature and in this particular context, ultimately eludes precise theoretical comprehension. We know of no simple conceptual framework or technique that can account fully for the kind of stories we have heard in our research. Well-intentioned, reasonable school leaders inevitably find ideas, plans, and actions resisted by others who have their own reasons for doing so. Leaders and leadership conditions, therefore, may be shaped by the very human and personal response to forms of resistance. Vulnerability, loneliness, fear, and power of all kinds--as well as clarity, honesty, humility and humanity-- may be called forth in leadership practice. It is these primal elements that seem to be most at stake in understanding the wound and the practice of leadership.

The wounding experience for school leaders is driven by a fundamental underlying proposition: a leader is impelled into a state of dissonance to which he or she adapts--this then reorganizes the meaning and direction of the leader's experience. This process has been described in the context of outdoor education programs, such as Outward Bound, as "adaptive dissonance" (Walsh & Golins, 1976). In a similar way, we believe the crisis or wounding experience for school leaders is, to a large extent, a tacit and adaptive (Heifetz, 1994) process, "lessons" potentially result from becoming conscious of leadership experiences in a new light,

and that wounding is about seeing one's part in them as something that one can affect, or not. It presumes (See Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, In Press, for a complete statement.) that individuals have within themselves vast resources for self understanding and for altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes, and self-directed behaviors and that these resources can be tapped if and when a climate of facilitative attitudes can be provided. Along these same lines, Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that because we work with others not just on tasks, learning an occupational role has,

> an aspect of social practice [that involves] the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations...Learning is not merely a condition of membership, but is itself an evolving form of membership (p. 53).

Membership in the leadership "club" typically involves learning and embracing commonly accepted expectations and norms for leadership. Models for school leadership have most often derived from the business sector and political arena (Callahan, 1962; Rost, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1996) where principals are supposed to ensure their schools conform to the "one best system" (Tyack, 1974). Top-down, male, hierarchical models predominate (Shakeshaft, 1989). Efforts to re-conceive educational leadership based on effective schools research (Hallinger & Murphy, 1991) have not produced the kind of leadership that has significantly improved schools. Adding to the work of Darling-Hammond (1997), Evans (1996), Fullan (1997) and others, Donaldson (2001) identifies and explicates incompatibilities between classic leadership models and the realities of school life, and concludes that the bureaucratic-structural model is a misfit.

A unifying theme of our work, the story within our stories, is this: understanding the meaning of wounding through the prism of the educational leader's experience offers a potentially remarkable path, not only to real leadership but to being a real person in one's leadership. The leadership wound, itself, represents an extraordinary source of learning and a critical opening to what may be most at stake in the practical exercise of leadership; namely, one's self. Three core understandings emerge from the five studies we have completed (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, In Press): The first is that leadership roles often do not support, confirm, or resonate with the psychic needs of the person who becomes a leader. A second is that wounding is an inevitable part of leadership. This leads to the third, that woundedness is a double edged (at least) sword. A wound has the potential to be a catalyst for the leader to grow or to be enmeshed in crisis. The wound presents the leader with an opportunity to explore and question the actual foundation of her leadership and herself. How a leader responds to being wounded can define her as a leader.

What is endangered, then, is what is evoked most fundamentally by the work of leadership itself: a person's integrity, identity, fallibility, and spirit. There are potent conscious and unconscious forces evident in leadership work that have an enormous capacity and thrust

toward growth when the opportunity presents itself. However, there are obvious challenges to a leader becoming one's self in leadership and for reasons that reside outside and inside the person. To find and to be oneself in leadership, is to find the patterns, the underlying order in the ceaselessly changing flow of leadership work, and to let those experiences tell the story.

A Way Of Looking At Some Structural Conditions Under Which School Leadership is Currently Practiced

In his presentation of a model for school leadership, Donaldson (2001) states that understandings of school leadership over the last few decades fail to meet two functional tests. The first is that successful school improvement has not occurred. Second, and more relevant to this study, our understandings of school leadership have not been sustainable for the leaders themselves (p.3). New leadership must, among other things, encourage new attitudes, and it must be healthful and replenishing for those who lead. One result of the two failures cited above is that many able educators are avoiding leadership roles because those positions are so stressful and difficult (Evans, 1996).

Lying at the center of Donaldson's concerns are six structural characteristics of work life which shape leaders' attempts to influence their schools. First, there is little time to convene people to plan, organize, and follow through. Second, contact and the transaction of business often take place on a "catch-as-catch-can" basis. Principals usually must reach staff in moments between priority activities which are a part of the other person's more immediate agenda. Third, results from formal staff meetings are often limited. Staff meetings are characterized by competing forces, limited time and energy, and an overall lack of quality time. Fourth, informal collegial connections and conversations are rich and can actually be a barrier to leadership. What this means is that although informal gatherings are the most continuous means of communication, opinion setting, and relationship building in schools, they are mostly inaccessible and even resistant to principals' formal attempts to guide and structure the school's direction. Fifth, important information is communicated informally and sometimes haphazardly. Compelled to rely on such conversation, principals often find that this is too rushed or too infrequent to constitute a systematic way for a leader to mobilize staff. And, sixth, the larger the school, the more complex and impersonal the environment. Simply stated, the larger the group, the fewer the opportunities a principal has for individual relationship-building or problem solving. Donaldson concludes that schools as currently constituted are organized for teachers to teach students, not for adults to work together in a coordinated fashion. Frustrated by the above description, principals find themselves pressing to get their message across, sometimes making decisions in ways that are counterproductive and foster resistance. Principals come to be seen for their positional authority, not for their ability to facilitate good practices and policies.

In addition to structural characteristics of schools, there are a number of cultural aspects that do not work in favor of leadership. Donaldson notes that the social norms of most schools conspire to work against leadership. He cites five themes that mark the cultural context of school leadership. First, teachers' rewards come from students and classrooms. As such, teachers seek

almost total control over what they do with their students. The willingness of a teacher to buy into the principal's agenda will hinge on how they perceive an initiative will impact on their already-established success in the classroom. Second, teachers also are highly individualistic. Principals' attempts to organize, coordinate, restructure, and monitor often meet with curiosity, doubt, and even resistance from teachers who guard their professional knowledge, prerogative, and integrity (Evans, 1996; Lieberman, 1988). Third, schools have been described as loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976) where collegial contact and sustained relationships are predicated on a host of factors, not all of which are directly related to coordinated efforts established by the principal. His or her attempt to orchestrate this permissive association norm can be perceived as disruptive and an infringement on teachers' right to choose. Such "intrusions" can be looked upon as just that. Fourth, another cultural aspect leading to leadership difficulties is the tenuous status of teachers. Teachers face an ambiguous persona. They are highly valued for their work, but undervalued by pay and social status. This ambiguity can contribute to difficulties organizing and mobilizing staff. Even educators, themselves, reinforce the undervaluing of classroom teaching by using it as a stepping stone to more valued work. Last, teachers are often quite satisfied to leave school wide matters to principals. In their view, it tends to have little bearing on their immediate concerns, and can deprive them of valuable time. Such attitudes can have a dramatic, adverse effect on collective involvement and organizational change.

These structural and cultural factors provide the basis and reality for the articulation of models of leadership which challenge traditional paradigms. But, they also lead us to consider some of the challenges which the person who is the leader of a school faces personally. Beyond the realm of models of leadership lies the deeply personal issue of leadership which in the face of potential stress is related to those challenges described above.

Gmelch and Gates (1997) state that much remains unknown about the relationships between stress and burnout with factors such as coping, job performance, job satisfaction, and other mediating factors such as support systems, role conflict, personality, gender, and age (the affective domain is not mentioned). They assert that further understanding of these relationships should increase present knowledge of the facets of administration which "need closer attention, modification of practice, and organizational restructuring to reduce stress and burnout experienced by administrators."

What Gmelch and Gates do claim evidence for, however, are several categories of administrator stress factors. These include role-based stress, task stress, boundary-spanning stress (external conditions), and conflict-mediating stress. The dependent variables of these categories, so to speak, are the indicators of stress and burnout which include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment.

The chronic work-life tension, including conditions and endemic issues facing the school leader today, and the resulting personal challenges, form the heart of our research. This leads to the question guiding the final paper: To what extent does a concern with the issues of the wounded leader lead to a generative understanding of leadership work itself?

Findings & Discussion

> For the first time in a long, long time I think I'm pretty comfortable with who I am as an educator, with who I am as a leader. And I don't always feel like I've got to try to be on. I just do it. And it's much more natural. So I think that's probably the healthiest thing that's come out of this [wounding experience]....I do think it's possible to be truer to myself as a school leader than I was the first time through.
>
> -Christopher (Interview for Wounded Leader Study)

Is it possible to be a real person in leadership? Chris Argyris (1985, 1987) argued that personal development in the workplace is dependent on a certain richness of environmental context that allows people to take risks, experiment, and feel safe enough to display their authentic self. Yet so many conceptions of leadership focus on the external aspects of leadership behavior, emphasizing what the leader "should do" without understanding the inner landscape of leadership -- that is, who the leader "is" and how she is brought to consciousness around her own foibles and fallibility. The leadership life, we recognize, is a complex balance of conflicting forces and tensions that manage to function most of the time. It is a life of service in which personal wishes are often turned toward the needs of others. The wound is signaled, however, by the opportunity to no longer take things for granted.

There is a need to understand a wound's etiology: why and how did this happen? It is equally useful is to study how different individuals respond to a wound, to explore coping and healing strategies; this is where we have primarily directed our attention. Although each leader's story has its own special choreography because each person is unique, there are elemental themes of vulnerability, isolation, fear, and power that are manifested in one way or another across a variety of wounding experiences. This has helped us understand what Carl Rogers meant when he said:

> The very feelings and experiences which have seemed to me most private, most personal and hence most incomprehensible by others, have turned out to be an expression for which there is resonance in other people. It has led me to believe that what is most personal and unique in each one of us is probably the very element which would, if it were shared or expressed, speak most deeply to others (1961, p. 26).

Leadership wounding inevitably points toward issues in the personal and interpersonal realms. In some ways, it is difficult for us to highlight just a few findings, given the richness of the data provided by respondents who shared with us their leadership experiences, some painful, some joyous. Vulnerability, fear, isolation, and power (and fear of powerlessness) are some of the inevitable and, we would argue, essential byproducts of leadership work. These form the foundation for our understanding of the wound, as well as implications for the work of leadership itself.

The Vulnerability Paradox

Leaders are always vulnerable to being wounded primarily because those in leadership positions are often the knowing or, in some cases, unknowing recipients of powerful projections on the part of others -- projections that take the form of expectations and hopes, as well as fears. Of course, without consciousness of this, leaders are often prey to living up to a heroic mythology rather than their own truth and circumstance. Related issues have to do with believing your own press. Many respondents describe how they learned how to deal with the requirements of their circumscribed roles, for example developing strategies for deflecting criticism, growing "scar tissue" and "binding" anxieties in their own "conspiracies' of busyness" (Donaldson, 2001) and work. Numerous stories and plot lines, at first glance, suggest the problem "lies out there" caused by some force or agency outside oneself over which one has no control. Indeed, while in many instances, this may be the case, such a belief nevertheless affords school leaders a kind of safety net from within and without. This perspective often fortifies distancing and in some cases, defensive tactics suggesting how emotional understanding and misunderstanding may result from what Hargreaves calls "emotional geographies" — consisting of "the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationship that help create, configure and color the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves and each other" (2001). In our research, we see a dialectic emerging — two diametrically opposed responses to a human situation -- between feelings of invulnerability and genuine vulnerability. In the case of the former, the leader potentially seeks safety by heroic self-assertion or in the case of the latter, becomes responsible and the "author of" his feelings and emotions about something he cannot control.

Consider Joan, a fourth year principal of a K-8 school of 800 children located in a middle class suburban community, who opened her daily newspaper one morning to find the headline: "JOAN WILLOW a TYRANT!" The article, based on a letter that an irate parent in her school had sent to the newspaper, described a series of decisions that Joan had made regarding the parent's children, his wife (a school employee) and the school program. A number of articles were subsequently published, prompted by the same parent, detailing further alleged misdeeds by Joan with yet another headline: "WILLOW, WEAK and DEFENSELESS."

Meeting Joan, you are immediately moved by her warm smile, kindness, and welcoming presence. Quiet and self-effacing, she has a remarkable open quality to her. She demonstrates a compelling modesty, at the same time acting with a quiet calm determination that in and of itself is inspiring.

> Joan described her reaction:
> I value my reputation certainly, but especially as a leader! People need to have confidence in your ability. There are parents who don't necessarily know me who are going to read this and think, hmmm...there is something else going on here. I didn't know this woman was like this.

Joan said she called her lawyer and superintendent to determine what she could do about the letters. She was told that as a semi-public official, she was "fair-game." It would be difficult to

argue and/or prove slander. Joan's reaction was as follows:

> I had to back down and it felt weird that I just had to wait and hope for other people to support me. I felt powerless. I felt slammed. It was unbelievable, it was very upsetting, I had a hard time sleeping. Oh, great, I'm a tyrant and weak and defenseless. In the meantime, I did feel powerless. I did feel defenseless, I was. I had to rely on other people to say no, 'She's not that bad, she's not a tyrant.' And to choose that word when I take such pains to not be autocratic, to be collaborative, to work with people. It was the antithesis of what I was. It didn't make me question what I was. I knew, but to have that in black and white in public, it was appalling--it was more than appalling. It was deeply upsetting because really that article was not just about my leadership style, it was about who I am. It was saying publicly that I was someone that I'm definitely not and I didn't want myself defined in that way. When you lose control of the definition you have to depend on other people; someone has taken something very precious away.

Joan told us that a groundswell of support soon emerged from parents, teachers, students, and community groups to counter the charges leveled against her. Thereupon, the accusing parent wrote a letter of apology, followed by a meeting with Joan where the apology was rendered in person. Joan summed up, "There was a kind of redemption and it was over."

Joan could appreciate and understand the evolving disruption that these events caused in her leadership life, even as she anticipated and expected an eventual end to the crisis. Concomitantly, she experienced the restitution of her "self," a bit scarred but determined to get on with her work. We were struck by Joan's remarkable and constant equanimity around this issue despite her upset. Never blaming anyone, the story perhaps illustrates the way quiet leaders work with their own vulnerability. Joan's reaction required a degree of modesty and measured effort that helped her move wisely across a hazardous landscape. Rather than striking back defensively in what might have seemed like a decisive and heroic act, she trusted in her own integrity and her community's faith in it. This story and numerous others we heard show how leaders cope with difficult challenges and with their own vulnerabilities. Here then is the vulnerability paradox simply put: wounding can be a time of the heart's greatest vulnerability. A school leader may steadfastly avoid the inherent traps and feelings of vulnerability only to awaken and find an honest direction in the very opening the wound offers.

Raymond Callahan (1962) coined the concept of the vulnerability thesis in his classic work, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*. He carefully documented how business values and practice had a powerful influence over American public education. What he also learned, to his surprise,

> *...was the extent, not only of the power of the business-industrial groups, but of the strength of the business ideology in the American culture on the one hand and the extreme weakness and vulnerability of schoolmen, especially school administrators, on the other* (p. vii-viii). [italics in original]

Callahan had not expected to find such diminished professional autonomy, nor did he expect to find how often superintendents made decisions based not on educational principles, but on a need to satisfy critics and to hold onto their jobs. He said,

> I am now convinced that very much of what has happened in American education since 1900 can be explained on the basis of the extreme vulnerability of our schoolmen to public criticism and pressure and that this vulnerability is built into our pattern of local support and control...The point is that when the schools are being criticized, vulnerable school administrators have to respond...this is an inadequate and inappropriate basis for establishing sound educational policy (p. viii).

Callahan attributed superintendent vulnerability to the way schools were financed and asserted, "So long as schoolmen have a knife poised at their financial jugular vein each year, professional autonomy is impossible (p. ix)." This "vulnerability thesis" has been used by many over the years as a way to explain the high turnover rate of superintendents; it has also been seen as an excuse (by those, for example, who do not accept Callahan's thesis).

Vulnerability persists as a relevant matter in leadership life today. Business continues to be a dominant force in education; in fact, we hear echoes from the Callahan era reverberating through the current school environment. Business leaders and politicians have joined forces in today's educational policy arena to support and argue for their agendas. We find a multitude of new policies, regulations, and legislative reform-based mandates that challenge and haunt school leaders. Public criticism and pressure is centered on school accountability. Many argue that standards-based reform is essentially an equity strategy and school leaders are being (perhaps, rightly) challenged to devise ways to close an achievement gap. When we speak with school administrators we find that they are, indeed, asked to be responsible and accountable for resolving these issues, and more. The vulnerability thesis is as relevant today as it was in 1900 (Eisner, 1985; Lutz & Wisener, 1996).

Vulnerability, as leaders's stories tell, can be a strength, not a weakness. Our purpose here is to highlight some selected aspects of an inner landscape of leadership and the sources of wounding that can be understood and determined from inside out. Therein lies the possibility for an awkward and often misunderstood relationship to vulnerability. Such an approach doesn't provide story lines for television shows, but it does seem to reflect the consistent human, often unglamorous striving of school leaders trying to stay open.

Isolation

After completing all the interviews, we must say that it is still, unfortunately, lonely at the top for school leaders. Philip Jackson (1976) described this condition years ago in a personal and poignant essay entitled, "Lonely at the Top: Observations on the Genesis of Administrative Isolation." Many school leaders continue to be isolated at the top in what Lucianne Carmichael (1985) called, "authority pyramids." Despite an emerging emphasis on collaboration and shared

leadership (Donaldson, 2001), teacher leadership (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996) and building leadership capacity (Lambert, 1998), school leaders are still prone to feeling alone and isolated, not only in the physical sense, but in a deeper emotional sense. It is not the kind of isolation born of solitude, and happens even if the organization is structured non-hierarchically. Stress from a curious kind of "public isolation" is a constantly recurring theme in leadership work and is likely to be exacerbated during crisis. Isolation in a fish bowl creates chronic tension and is a paradox for the school leader (Evans, 1996). The interpersonal and intrapersonal elements that contribute to such feelings of isolation, we believe, are subtle and form the basis for a profound form of wounding.

Themes of leadership isolation and insulation abound in the stories we gathered. Carlos's story is but one example. A young, eager, and gregarious leader, Carlos left a school where he was a popular and well respected assistant principal to begin a new post. Appointed principal of a large suburban elementary school, the district office informed him that major restructuring was planned for his school and numerous staff would have to be transferred in June. Thinking about entering his first principalship he told us, "One of the things I swore that I would do is that when I had information, anything that I was able to share, I would share as soon as I could; information is power." Carlos also spoke at length about his belief that, "building relationships and building trust is perhaps the most important thing that I can do in order to shape the culture of the school," so that's exactly what he set out to do. He had an understanding of the importance of the interpersonal side of leadership, but despite such positive assertions, the culture he expected to create was not yet within his grasp. Instead, a novice principal found himself increasingly isolated from teachers in his building and mired in strained relationships. He was someone with a strong concept of the kind of leader he wanted to be and the role he would play but unwittingly did so to his own detriment and that of people around him. Carlos assured us that he was being honest and open with his faculty about the impending transfers. He thought that by sharing information, which he did at the fall faculty meeting, he was sharing power. Yet the plan backfired. The school year was saturated with negative emotions, mistrust, tensions, and divisions.

We talked about what he was feeling during this stressful period and he said that he never imagined he could feel so alone: "It was just a very lonely feeling to know that people are upset, and it doesn't matter very much what you say." He said that although surrounded by people the principalship is,

> a lonely position, and I don't think that everyone realizes that. Alone in the sense that there are massive amounts of responsibility, work that has to be done, work that we want everyone to be passionate about and not everybody always shares that passion, but everybody wants 100 percent of you; there are a zillion stake holders that pull in all different directions.

During our conversation, Carlos tried to make sense of what happened and he chose a metaphor to describe his wound:

> Imagine being in a butterfly garden...You know that every caterpillar will become a butterfly, and your goal is to get every caterpillar that you're working with to become a butterfly and then sometimes as principal, you're stuck with the metamorphosis. Kind of stuck in that cocoon...But it feels like in this position, like you're always in the cocoon, and that they don't want you to fly...That's kind of how I felt.

Carlos seems to be a sincere person, a man with soaring talent who genuinely wants to do good things for kids and for his school, so it's easy to feel his frustration of being held back. He felt trapped and did not know how to get what he needed from teachers. He was the outsider. He also felt locked in to one way of being a leader with no foreseeable exit. His belief about a leader's role, that is to be responsible for the teacher's development, may get closer to the source of wounding. We implicitly and sometimes explicitly expect our leaders to solve all of our problems and to be responsible for everything.

Carlos's feelings of isolation and loneliness were real--and those are feelings shared with school leaders everywhere, especially wounded leaders. In an era of high stakes testing, accountability demands, and shifting reform agendas, we are experiencing an epidemic of leadership loneliness and burnout. When principals become the outsider and experience disapproval from teachers, the consequence may be that they become sequestered and develop "self-sealing theories-in-use" (Argyris & Schon, 1974), as we saw with Carlos. Principals and teachers alike must accept responsibility for their own professional growth, as well as for each other's. When that doesn't happen the upshot can be, as it was in this story, that professional growth is stunted for some members of the community and groups become detached from each other. Ultimately, the entire school suffers.

Carlos said he felt redeemed when the official budget was published that spring and it showed that what he had been saying all along was true. He apologized to his faculty at the end of the school year for any hurt he may have caused them. Important for long term survival, he established a strong network of trusted colleagues who he can turn to for support when feeling vulnerable. Carlos told us that he "walked into the second year as a different principal," and now six years later he can say, "I am a different principal today," implying that his personal change and growth has continued:

> I think I've grown a lot. I guess that's why I said this has been more about my learning than it's been about everybody else's. I'm a very different person than I was before this started. I've learned a lot about me...I think that I do the job differently than I did when I started.

Necessary boundaries in leadership life require a degree of administrative isolation relating to personal and professional roles, visibility, decision-making ("the buck stops here"), and confidentiality. The chronic tension affecting the leader from without and within has the school leader spending most of the time being other-centered with success begetting success: the more you care and the more helpful you are, the longer stretches the line of problems to solve and

people to help. Being of service in the school and community can make the school leader a magnet and an object of public sentiments about schooling and a host of other issues (Ackerman, Donaldson & Van Der Bogert, p. 164, 1996), easily threatening the barriers between public and private, career and family, and professional and personal, that many need for a sense of balance and meaning in their lives.

Crossing boundaries, however, creates a subtle form of isolation that seems to occur primarily because the leader has lost the right balance in her own belonging: To whom do I belong, to me or them? Many school leaders described their own particular wandering in the conspiracies of busyness and the constantly orbiting planetary cultures that Donaldson (2001) described so well. Many navigate the minefield out of a circumscribed role, the very role distancing itself slowly from others, as well as from their own feelings, losing themselves in the process.

Our discussion raises questions: What does it require to come out from hiding, from behind the insulation and the isolation? How can leaders remain true to their own interior? Is there a common ground from which no leader can be distanced, or isolated, or excluded? If leaders are to be permitted to be whole, these are just some of the challenges confronting them and their schools.

Fear

Fear usually found its way into the crisis stories we gathered, sometimes as a central theme, other times as a corollary to issues of isolation, power, and vulnerability. Indeed, even without wounding leadership life is influenced and, in some cases, determined by fear of one kind or another. Leadership fears identified in the interviews assumed various guises, such as the fear of failure, the fear of change and of not changing, and the fear of being judged and criticized. We found many administrators have an understandable fear of being fired or worse, of losing their career identity. A common fear of the school leader, as described in our interviews, is that of not measuring up. Human fears lurk below the leadership surface and are apt to emerge to haunt or help a leader during crisis. Most school leaders we met, however, like to keep their fears at arm's length, reluctant to admit, at least in public, that they have them at all.

Consider Sharon. Sharon is a tough, straight talking administrator with a reputation in the district for being a problem-solver. She is also poised and gracious, the kind of principal who keeps chilled water bottles and treats in her office to offer guests, young and old. Appointed principal of the town's newly built high school, she was not prepared for the severe backlash from teachers assigned to her, people who did not want to be there and had "an ax to grind." She told us how after years of success, suddenly she was faced with a divisive faculty prone to "back-stabbing and one-upmanship." It was an honor to have been selected to open this flagship school and she was afraid that she would not live up to the district's expectations or her own. She said,

> It was a year when I really started to question my abilities of being a true leader because I looked upon it as my failure. That here I've brought people together and even though they came with all this different baggage, it still was my job to make it cohesive, and to fix it...It was very frustrating...I never anticipated that this would happen. I was always the peacemaker...I've always had good relationships with people. And it just hit me right between the eyes...I was shocked.

Despite her strong character, when she found herself in this crisis, she was fearful of appearing weak or powerless to her faculty and to her supervisors. An experienced principal who had just earned a highly coveted position, she still felt it was necessary to hide her fears from others or else she would be perceived as weak and that, she believed, would be leadership suicide. We talked about how strength is a hallmark of leadership. This explains why she began to act in ways to ensure that no one would know how she really felt inside: "You don't dare let the district office know you're not successful," nor she said should one expose a weakness, such as fear of failure, to subordinates. She revealed to us that it was acceptable to talk about achievements, about strategy and goals, but not about the disaster she feared was imminent in her school, and certainly she could never admit that she did not know what to do. Reflecting on the experience, she acknowledged that she was not being true to herself during this difficult time.

When telling her story, it became evident to Sharon that fear is a potent emotion and can erect barriers that separate leaders from the school community. With the crisis deepening, she tried to hide her fears from others and even herself; the fear was becoming counterproductive. Precious energy was being used to conceal rather than open up to the conflicts she was experiencing. She became distanced from many teachers and staff. A leader can easily become trapped in a negative cycle of fear and isolation.

Practitioners like Sharon who have reached the higher echelons of organizational life typically have invested a great deal of themselves in their career in order to get where they are; consequently, their personal identity is intertwined with their leadership role. The threat of losing that position, of being told they are not good enough, can be overwhelming, even devastating. Such fear can engulf people, sometimes temporarily, other times permanently.

The crisis consumed Sharon with fear but it also presented an opportunity to readdress her relationship to fear. We have found that the wound creates an extraordinary context for seeing and understanding the specific nature of leadership fears. As such, it is simultaneously the place where the leader needs to look more carefully and courageously, and the very place that most fills the leader with fear.

Fear can be a gift. Sending signals that there is danger it propels people into action; some administrators even find courage through fear. Sharon said that she realized she could only hide from her fears for so long — in time she tapped into them and began to listen to her instincts. For her, a turning point in the crisis was when she "started to listen to my gut." She admitted to herself what she was feeling. Showing humility, she next summoned the strength to take a chance

and communicate her fears to the teachers. In a public forum, she told them about her fear for the future success of the school and how she worried that they all would not live up to their commitment to the community. To her fascination and relief, she discovered that she was not alone, others shared these fears, while still others were awakened to the crisis — this opening up to staff did not backfire as she feared it would. A small group of people actually began to join together to deal with the communal stress and fear. This was an important step toward achieving needed change in the school.

When we left Sharon, she was pleased about the personal change and growth she was experiencing. She said that she was now more humbled in her role as leader. She was getting more comfortable with the messiness of her work and less rigid than before the crisis. Summing up, she said she was trying to not hide her feelings from herself or others, and felt more free to be her "imperfect self."

This story reminds us that when fear is managed well, it can be positive; it has the potential to spur a person on to do what is needed, what is right. There are multiple shades of fear. There is the thrill and exhilaration of risk and fear, not unlike a roller coaster ride. Then there is the oppressive weight of fear that immobilizes a person and shuts down risk taking. One key for leaders is to find the balance between too little and too much fear; another key is to realize that the equation varies with the leader.

Perhaps the most challenging fear of all is that of really showing up for leadership. To be fully present, passionate and committed in a real and personal way with all of one's fears and desires in tow is among the greatest challenges of leadership life. In his classic book, *The Wounded Healer*, Henry Nouwen said, "Nobody can offer leadership to anyone unless he makes his presence known -- that is unless he steps forward out of anonymity and apathy of his milieu and makes the possibility of fellowship visible" (1972, p. 65).

The irony, of course, is that a school operates as if fear does not exist; the culture of schools and the culture of leadership do not offer much solace. We expect our leaders to be fearless and most leaders also believe that they ought not to be afraid. It is a reckless expectation. Fear is part of the human condition of leadership and schooling — particularly when wounded — and needs to be acknowledged, accepted and, we dare say, even embraced.

What would it mean to be fully visible as a leader? In the principal preparation classes that we have been teaching for years, the experience that many students anticipate with greatest dread is the act of public speaking: the first faculty meeting or student assembly. This is not surprising. It is often hard to hear or hide from our own voices speaking in those times. What would it mean to face the life of leadership on and off the stage without such fear?

Power

Concerns about power permeated the leader stories told to us regardless of the context of

the wounding experience. Many of the leaders interviewed talked about struggles with the ambiguities of power in their own leadership. Leaders rarely feel that they have real power and this feeling is apt to be heightened in times of crisis. The paradox of power leaves leaders more aware of their vulnerability and their dependency on others. Put simply, most school leaders are surprised at how little real power they have.

The leaders we talked to all had positional power. Vested with formal authority in their position as principal, headmaster or superintendent, some were discovering just how tentative their power really was. The school leader is traditionally given tremendous responsibility, but not a lot of authority. A crisis helps remind the leader how elusive power is, regardless of one's job title.

Listen to Christopher's story. At the age of forty he returned to the district where he had begun his career as a language arts teacher years earlier, this time as the superintendent. He told us, "I felt like I had arrived professionally. I could do this. You know at that point in my life I didn't think there was anything I couldn't do. That sounds cocky, but, oh, I felt good." Christopher is an articulate and erudite leader who in his early twenties flirted with a career in the church but then decided to devote his life to the education profession and family.

A couple of years into the new job the school board membership changed and overnight his management style and vision were out of favor. Soon thereafter, he was faced with a major budget shortfall. Although he was given a vote of confidence in September and the board publically proclaimed "we'll get through this," in every meeting the board chair "was second guessing decisions. Why did you do that?" Sardonically, Christopher said that he was accused of being an educator, not a manager. He was blamed for this problem and all its negative repercussions, and said, "Things appeared to be unraveling. I was trying to keep my finger in the dike....confidence in me was eroding even from my supporters. And they wanted to see if I could, quote, manage my way out of this." He worried about losing his power base in the community and on the board. He became less and less sure of how much power he really had and questioned how he should or could use power to remedy the situation. Indeed, he told us that he feared he was losing control of his life.

> He began to act out of fear, and said,
> I think sometimes I may have in my eagerness to be the superintendent there, allowed them [the new board] to direct me in a way that I really didn't believe in, but did because it was good for me or good for my career....and thought I could maybe change it once I got going on it. And that turned out not to be the case.

Christopher's response to the crisis was to try hard to please the board so he could hold on to his beloved position, but along the way lost sight of his own leadership beliefs. He realizes now that he was driven by fear rather than what he believed was the right thing to do in his district or what was really right for himself. Should's and ought to's dictated him.

In the midst of all the turmoil, Christopher found the courage to change his life and to leave the district. It was becoming clear to him that he could not bear to be molded by the board anymore. He negotiated a year off to reflect on his purpose and goals in life, and to decide what was next in his career. Instead of being paralyzed by fear, he eventually used the wounding crisis as a foundation for personal change and growth. He took a big risk and started over in a new setting as principal of a middle school. Reflecting on what the change meant to him, he said,

> For the first time in a long, long time I think I'm pretty comfortable with who I am as an educator, with who I am as a leader. And I don't always feel like I've got to try to be on. I just do it. And it's much more natural. So I think that's probably the healthiest thing that's come out of this [wounding experience].....I have reached a level of maturity, whatever you want to call it. I don't have to press. This is who I am and what I am. I'm comfortable with that. Others who know me seem to be comfortable with it also. And that's a good thing. I guess my focus is less on my career and more on who I am as a person. The kind of husband and father I want to be. And the kind of educator I want to be. And that supercedes the career goal.

He shed the leadership facade.

Given time and distance from the painful experience, Christopher was able to learn from it and told us he has developed a different and better relationship to his leadership role and power. He now says that he is "in a good place intellectually and professionally. I feel to some degree I'm in control of my life where I hadn't been in control. Other people had too much to say about how and when you do things." Christopher talked about how he had been so afraid of losing his position and power that he inadvertently ended up losing both. We discussed how he had lost himself. Instead of suppressing fears and distorting power issues as he had in the past, he tries now to accept and use them to better understand himself. He said that no longer will he allow himself to be dominated by fear, such as fear of powerlessness, and is determined to be guided by his values. One of the biggest outcomes of this wounding experience, he thinks, is that his identity is no longer defined by the position and its trappings. He summed up,

> Maybe I let people have too much control. Regardless, I'm happy with my station in life right now. And I think because of that it translates to my leadership style. People feel comfortable with me and confident in me because I'm comfortable and confident....I do think it's possible to be truer to myself as a school leader than I was the first time through.

Today he is more transparent in his dealings with people than he was before the crisis. Christopher has allowed himself to be himself in his new leadership role and he finds that empowering. He points out how, in an odd way, he is discovering that is empowering for others as well. The more he is open about who he is, others, he finds, are more open with him. Most important, he is striving "to be that self which one truly is" (Kierkegaard, 1941b, p. 29) with all his contradictions and vulnerabilities.

Power usually finds its inverted face in the fear of powerlessness (McClelland, 1975). Power is a central force in schools and in the lives of school leaders, driving them, as well as wounding them and others. Power, strength, and competency are traditionally sought after as important qualities in leadership. Balanced use of power is critical to school life, creating common goals and giving meaning to work. A school functions through power structures of one design or another. Pervasive and predominant conceptions of power in our culture and schools define it in terms of the ability to control and impose one's will on others, often leaving a negative connotation. Yet power is essential to a leader's success in leading change and realizing goals. Thus, power has traditionally gone hand in hand with leadership and played a major role, like fear, for good and bad. Failure to recognize the many faces of power, that it can be used constructively and destructively, forms a foundation for wounding.

Two central questions emerge from our discussion: How do leaders come out of the shadows of their own fears to discover the elemental nature of their power? How is leadership power empowering for school leaders and for others?

Conclusions

"Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made."
-Immanuel Kant

On the eve of his retirement after fifty years on the job, a wounded and wizened school leader told us, "A good school must learn to bend itself around the strengths and vulnerabilities of its leader." We see this as a genuine challenge for leaders and schools today. There is increasing evidence to justify placing our hopes in this vision. We have sketched below some of the qualities of a leadership mindset implied by all that we have learned in our work with wounded leaders. Each "I" statement in its own way offers a partial promise for thinking anew the meaning of real leadership and the hope for becoming real in one's leadership.

- I am genuinely interested in learning things, which helps others in their attempts to learn.
- I move sometimes awkwardly toward understanding the leadership position I am in and the responsibilities with which I have been entrusted by others.
- I may make mistakes and I may be inconsistent at times.
- I can talk about my leadership with others.
- I have complicated and sometimes contradictory feelings about power and sharing it.
- I value and respect the dignity of others, yet when I'm fearful I sometimes forget it.
- I try to remain aware of what I need from my leadership and what others need at any particular time.
- I can focus more on challenges at-hand rather than spending my energies proving I am something I am not.

- I can use more of my knowledge, skills and creative imagination in framing and solving problems than in defending myself.
- I can freely change and grow in a leadership position because I am not bound by rigid concepts of what I have been, am now, or ought to be.
- By my own openness and honesty with myself, I can bring out these same qualities in others.

An essential job requirement suggested by this leadership mindset is that the leader is allowed to be a whole person in her leadership, aware of attitudes that she holds, accepting of her feelings, and real in her relationships with others. Equally important, of course, is that she possess the critical skills and knowledge to lead herself and others toward the improvement of teaching and student learning. The qualities and skills embedded in this kind of leadership are not mutually exclusive. We view them as complimentary and highly interactive perspectives on fundamental processes of human growth and learning for school leaders.

What does this conception of leadership work mean if applied to the challenges of educational leadership today? American schools and the people who work in them, including and especially school leaders, are increasingly being subjected to and asked to engage in various forms of evaluation and accountability regarding the learning of students. Standards-based reform has inevitably led to a more vigorous public conversation about the nature of school leadership that can succeed in today's milieu. One response has been to produce an avalanche of innovation and reform that have brought their own set of victories, some would argue, and even more challenges for school leaders, including closing the achievement gap between rich and poor schools, getting accountability right for students and adults, improving teaching, as well as building district and school capacity for leadership, among others. The retiring Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Jerome T. Murphy said, "Our expectations have grown much faster than the performance of our schools" (2001). Indeed, for many educators, not only school leaders, a kind of weariness or wariness has set in as expectation for performance-theirs as well as students--sometimes far exceeds well-intentioned effort. Some educators feel blamed for problems in schools that are beyond their control. Others feel incompetent. Many school leaders--some admit it and some don't-- do not possess the requisite skills to confront outmoded professional practices and to lead in ways that respond effectively to the increasing demands faced under standards-based reform (Elmore, 2000). The cumulative response for many educators today is collectively and profoundly dispiriting as they negotiate sometimes adversarial and often ambiguous encounters with their public.

These conditions describe a generalized set of challenges for education and for the many excellent school leaders who feel these same challenges in their own wounds. The dissonance so evident in the education profession and in society means good, effective, and well-intentioned leaders must learn to struggle productively with their wounds. The "cure" presented here through the lens of the wounded leader is not meant to propose yet another model of leadership, nor is it intended to be overly idealized or romanticized. It just seems to make sense that a person has a solid chance of succeeding in leadership -- especially today -- because she really knows who she is in a whole-hearted way, what she wants to do, what needs doing, and how it might be done.

We need this kind of life and energy in our leadership more than ever.

A recurring theme throughout our research is that an important learnable moment for leaders occurs during a wounding crisis, during times of discord. These moments represent opportunities that if missed, can have enormous costs, both to the individual leader and to the organization. Heifetz (1994) suggests that "in a crisis we tend to look for the wrong kind of leadership. We call for someone with answers, decision, strength, and a map of the future...in short, someone who can make hard problems simple" (p. 2). He asserted that it is actually maladaptive for a group to be "habitually seeking solutions from people in authority" (p. 73). We agree. It is also possible that leaders and schools will adapt to a crisis dysfunctionally. Indeed, many do.

Many school leaders inevitably become "other centered" (Ackerman, Donaldson & Van Der Bogert, 1996), carrying the weight of other people's worries, frustrations, problems, and desires, then develop their own wounds precisely because they often believe they must hide their fears and vulnerabilities from others and quite often from themselves. This was a common issue for school leaders we interviewed.

This paper argues that the school leader suffers from a serious problem that can potentially make leadership itself hazardous to his health; seen through the eyes of the wounded leader, it can be dehumanizing to have a focus that often discounts the meaning of his personal experience--and everyone else's. A healthier approach, reflected in the characteristics of the leader embodied in the portrait we have offered here and developed in a variety of ways throughout our studies, is that it is primarily in the awareness of feeling and the inner experience of emotion that a person can discover who he is. Put simply, a school leader, as well as everyone else in a school, has the capacity for developing genuine emotional intelligence and using it effectively. One of the gifts of a keen emotional intelligence is the ability to be more responsive in practice to the culture of the school so that, in addition to adapting themselves to their organization's culture, leaders are learning to help cultures adapt in ways that allow the culture to flourish for everyone. This kind of leadership requires conscious and skillful development of a supportive environment that learns to manage and adapt its problems collectively, that is a culture that truly depends on the knowledge and leadership of the group. Rather than always pointing fingers somewhere else, especially and only toward leaders, schools can be remolded to reflect a culture of shared responsibility for what happens, as well as what does not happen.

There are educational institutions and leaders moving and learning their way tentatively in this direction. The critical element in these approaches is that the leader and leadership itself are being understood in a more personal and real way. Operating from this reconfigured role means the leader is given permission to acknowledge limitations and can be open about reaching out for what is needed to lead effectively. As brought out in the interviews, leaders often believe that they are supposed to be helpers and fixers, as well as independent and strong, the same qualities that can thwart them from listening to their own needs. To be sure, traditional criteria for judging leadership effectiveness continue to dominate the leadership landscapes of

preparation, in-service programs, and practice: "be right," "be in control," "be invulnerable," "be rational," and even, "be liked," to name a few. To redefine these criteria would signal a sea change in our understanding of leadership knowledge, responsibility, caring, information, and conflict respectively. Put differently, to accept one's separateness and honor that of others, to inquire through interaction and a genuine search for questions and answers, to take responsibility for oneself, but not the thoughts and feelings of others or the forces over which one has no control, and to confront and use authority as the ultimate expression of caring are all signals of real leadership.

The changing norms of schooling are giving way to new and different leadership forms and there is emerging advocacy for such forms -- teacher leadership, for example -- viewing the work of leadership as, integrally, the conscious, active, and deliberate "cultivation" (Donaldson, 2001) of leadership in schools. Leadership today needs to survive and, in fact, flourish based on two fundamental assumptions and practices: namely, that there are many qualified people under the schoolhouse roof who want and need to be involved in leadership work and that schools and districts must be actively involved in helping to grow their own leaders to do that work. This represents a very different and promising way of thinking about leadership in schools. This is also a new way of thinking about roles and responsibilities and the possibility that schools can really take on new ways of leading themselves. As such, school organizations and communities may begin to look and behave more like ecosystems where more have access to the whole, and people support and nurture one another with trust.

A large conversation is taking shape today within our emerging educational ecosystems, in part, thanks to an ever-expanding variety of technologies permitting individuals, as well as schools, to communicate and share information and knowledge with each other in timely, instantaneous ways, and at blinding speeds. The advent of this exciting technology poses even more adaptive challenges to educators who place a high value on natural, open, and honest communication. Clearly, we must remember to keep our own human voices unmistakably real in the so-called information age so we can enable and nurture humane organizational structures, forms, and, especially, leadership that remains passionately committed to human learning in all its infinite variety.

Ultimately, there is no simple formula for leadership survival. The wound can be understood for what it is: an opening in the body, a place made vulnerable to injury, infection, and, perhaps, change. It is, as David Whyte says, "the very place we are open to the world, whether we like it or not" (2001, p.129). The deepest obligation a leader has is to engage continually in a reflective process of making sense of his leadership, and trusting his influence on others and the school. For many leaders we have been fortunate to meet, their trust in the integrity and vitality of their own leadership is inevitably balanced and shaped by their shadows--creeping self doubts, fears, and questions. It is primarily these aspects that, in fact, help them stay on course. Personal change inevitably runs up against entrenched forces and is experienced as difficult, forced, unnatural, and sustainable only through considerable effort and will. The leader doesn't have to have all the answers, doesn't have to be ruled by fear and driven by displays of

power, and doesn't have to wound others and himself or herself in a mutually wounding cycle that is ultimately self-sealing and isolating.

In the preceding discussion, we have described some sense of the arduous, never-ending self-scrutiny and inner work that we dare say is a requirement of the work of leadership and the best hope, as we see it, for a "cure" in our lifetime. In our view, such a requirement is more a privilege than a burden because it represents a built-in safeguard against stagnation and an untimely living death for school leaders. To guide others responsibly in their development must entail a deep understanding of oneself. To require a leader to develop emotional intelligence and interpersonal relatedness demands one examining and coming to terms with one's own modes of relating. The cure, of course, lies in always evolving and continuously growing in self-knowledge and awareness. We imagine leadership where a leader can show up fully as a person, whole, with strengths, vulnerabilities, and all. We envision a school with an emotional and intellectual center of gravity, spacious enough to hold not just the leader's virtues and foibles, but everyone's in a productive and nurturing orbit.

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